

Message Text

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ACTION COA-01

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 DLOS-03 PM-03 L-02 NSC-05 INT-05

COME-00 EB-07 CG-00 DOTE-00 FMC-01 PA-01 PRS-01

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TO USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR PLOS EFIS EC US

SUBJECT: LAW OF THE SEA - TUNA BOAT SEIZURES

1. PRESS COVERAGE IN RECENT DAYS HAS BEEN TRYING TO
CREATE IMPRESSION THAT THE UNITED STATES EITHER
HAS FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES ACCEPTED THE 200-MILE
TERRITORIAL SEA LIMIT OR IS ON THE VERGE OF DOING
SO.

2. THE TWO MAJOR NEWSPAPERS IN ECUADOR GAVE HEAVY COVERAGE
TO SEPARATE NEWS ITEMS BACKING THIS THESIS. EL UNIVERSO,
THE GUAYAQUIL NEWSPAPER WITH THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST CIRCULA-
TION, USED A FOUR-COLUMN HEADLINE OF THE TOP OF PAGE ONE
FEBRUARY 5 READING, "UNITED STATES VIRTUALLY RECOGNIZES
THE ECUADOREAN THESIS OF 200 MILES," WITH A SUB-
HEAD "SEVEN TUNA SHIPS WITH LICENSES." ON FEBRUARY 6,
QUITO'S INFLUENTIAL EL COMERCIO ON PAGE THREE CARRIED A
THREE-COLUMN HEADLINE, "BROAD SECTOR OF U.S. CONGRESS
ADVOCATES DEFENSE OF FISHING FOR 200 MILES."

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3. THE EL UNIVERSO ARTICLE WAS BASED ON AN ECUADOREAN PRESS

AGENCY (AEP) ARTICLE LISTING ALL FOREIGN SHIPS WHICH HAD PURCHASED LICENSES TO FISH WITHIN THE 200-MILE LIMIT; AMONG THE 37 WERE, IN ADDITION TO THE SEVEN U.S. TUNA SHIPS, 11 FROM JAPAN, WHICH ALSO DISPUTES THE ECUADOREAN TERRITORIAL CLAIM. EL COMERCIO HAD CARRIED A SIMILAR NEWS RELEASE TWO DAYS EARLIER, BUT PLAYED IT WITHOUT THE EDITORIAL INTERPRETATION GIVEN BY THE GUAYAQUIL NEWSPAPER. THE IMPLICATION WAS CLEAR, HOWEVER, FOR ANYONE REMOTELY INFORMED OF THE BASIC ISSUES.

4. EL COMERCIO NOTED BRIEFLY IN AN EARLIER EDITORIAL THAT THE LAST SESSION OF THE SENATE HAD APPROVED THE BILL EXTENDING U.S. TERRITORIAL CLAIMS TO 200 MILES, WHICH TO THE WAY OF THINKING OF MANY IN THE CURRENT MILITARY GOVERNMENT MAY BE TANTAMOUNT TO FINAL LEGAL CONFIRMATION. IN ITS MOST RECENT COVERAGE, THE NEWSPAPER USES AN ANSA ARTICLE DATEDLINE WASHINGTON, COVERING THREE COLUMNS RUNNING HALF A PAGE, CITING "A STRONG SECTOR OF CONGRESS" FAVORING EXTENSION OF THE 12-MILE LIMIT. THE STORY DOES NOTE THAT THE BILL, ALTHOUGH APPROVED BY THE SENATE LAST YEAR, MUST BE REINTRODUCED IN THE NEW CONGRESS, AND INCLUDES OPPOSITION VOICED IN CONGRESS AND THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT.

5. BOTH EL UNIVERSO AND EL COMERCIO BOTH ARE CONSERVATIVE AND STRONG SUPPORTERS OF THE GOE POSITION ON LOS, AND IT IS SAFE TO SAY THEY REFLECT OFFICIAL THINKING AT LEAST ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE. IF THE GOE IN FACT IS CONVINCED THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL FINALLY SHIFT ITS LOS STANCE, WHICH IS THE IMPRESSION GIVEN BY THE MEDIA, THEN ITS LOGIC IN THE CURRENT TUNA DISPUTE IS MUCH MORE APPARENT.

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